



Hon. Robert T. Matsui

Member of Congress

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Robert T. Matsui

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REP. MATSUI STATEMENT ON RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Robert T. Matsui (D-Sacramento) made the following statement today regarding a United States House Resolution supporting the efforts of the Japanese American, German American and Italian American communities in increasing awareness of events surrounding the internment and exclusion of families and individuals during World War II:

“I rise today in support of H.Res. 56 and commend the Japanese American, German American and Italian American communities for their efforts to commemorate and promote a National Day of Remembrance. Although this is a regrettable time in American history, we cannot let this period be forgotten. It is only by increasing public awareness of the events surrounding the restriction, exclusion and internment of individuals and families during World War II that we can guard against such future violations.

“Sixty-two years ago, the signing of Executive Order 9066 led to the forced internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II. They were held without cause and without recourse. These individuals and families suffered needlessly because of rampant fear, prejudice and a lack of political leadership.

“These pervasive feelings also imposed limits on the freedoms of German Americans and Italian Americans. The government restricted their travel and seized their property, and the public branded them as the enemy.

“In 1988, the federal government acknowledged the tragic injustice of the internment. Due in large part to the efforts of the Japanese American community, the government issued a formal apology and offered redress to internees. We can never compensate for what was taken away from these families and individuals. But we can honor their struggle and their legacy by understanding the events that lead to their internment.

“It takes a strong and confident nation to look introspectively at its own actions and admit that it made a mistake. Today, it is accepted that the World War II Japanese internment was a grievous error. Not only did these actions disrupt lives and communities, it has left a stain on America's history of freedom, tolerance, and liberty for all of its citizens.

“Marking the anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 9066 provides a time for political leaders to reflect on the lessons of the past and on the importance of principled leadership in the future. We must never again sacrifice the core values of our democracy and Constitution, especially in times of uncertainty and emergency.

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“The National Day of Remembrance honors those who suffered and reminds us to strive toward a better society where such prejudice does not exist. We all have a role in ensuring that such injustices do not happen again.

“Once again, I want to join my colleagues in recognizing the very important work the Japanese American, German American and Italian American communities are doing in raising awareness of the National Day of Remembrance. I also want to commend Representative Honda for his efforts to bring this resolution to the floor. To those personally affected by these events, I especially want to thank you for sharing your stories and for your efforts in educating the American public. Your leadership inspires us all.”

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